

thinksmall

A tiny front yard  
in Venice, California,  
makes it all—  
sun, shade, lawn,  
water, patio—  
look simple



**CALIFORNIA DREAM** Vickie Karten and her 10-year-old daughter, Rachel, below, feed the ducks in front of their Venice house. Opposite: A view of the canal from their front yard. *Rosa Abraham Darby*—flanked by *Westringia fruticosa* "Wynabbie Gem"—scales the picket fence.

# streamlined style

Who doesn't dream of owning a waterfront cottage in a place where summer lasts all year long? You could sit on the porch and take in the view, feed ducks paddling by, or sail away in a rowboat hithead just outside your front gate— in December, no less.

But there are drawbacks to

living along the canals of sunny Venice, California, especially for a gardener with grand plans. Most of the lots are tiny, with no backyard and little privacy. For industrial designer Stuart Karten and his graphic-designer wife, Vickie, however, the close quarters weren't an issue. They actually prefer the coziness of

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM STREET - PORTER

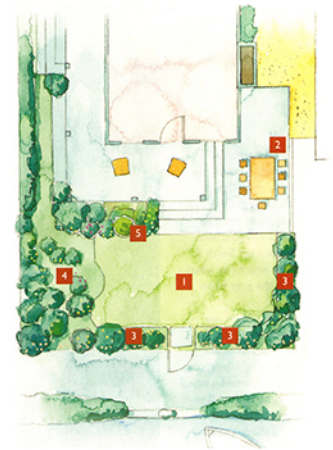




ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE SANDERSON

Venice to more sprawling parts of L.A. "It's a real neighborhood," Vickie says, "where people walk by and stop to chat." Still, they rented in the area for a decade before buying. The problem, Vickie explains, was a severe case of house envy: once they saw this particular place, no other would do. "Stuart and I would ride by in our boat and say, 'one day it will be ours.'" Finally, they left a note for the owner, and one day, three years ago, the house became theirs—as did its boring front lawn.

Lucky for the Kartens, garden designer Barry Campion is a friend. "I always told her she'd



be the first person I called if we bought a house," Vickie says. And while Campion says the Kartens were ideal clients, who gave her and her partner Nicholas Walker carte blanche, the project was far from easy. "Just because a garden is small," she explains, "doesn't mean it's less complicated. The key is re-

**A CLEVER PLAN.** above, Barry Campion fit everything you could ask of a garden into this tiny yard: a lush lawn (1), a dining patio (2), sunny flower borders (3), a shade garden (4), even a water feature (5). Opposite: A hedge of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and a pink flowering escallonia screen out the neighbors. *Penstemon 'Purple Passion'* and *Pittosporum tobira 'Creme de Menthe'* grow at the base of a jacaranda tree, while water hyacinth and pickerel weed thrive in a concrete pot turned mini pond, beneath the blooms of *Rosa Sally Holmes* (close-up, left).



**GRAY MATTER** To make the patio meld seamlessly with the concrete porch, right, Campion paved it in broken concrete rescued from a building site. The Kartens then furnished it with a teak dining set from Smith & Hawken, below, which has weathered to match the grey floor.

straint ---no wavy lines, no complicated planting schemes.”

Taking her cues from the house---sweet in a '50's sitcom way--- Campion framed a small lawn with old fashioned flowers. An existing jacaranda tree cried out for a shade garden, leaving the other side of the yard open for a patio, which Campion paved using peices of concrete that echo the porch floor. Pittosporum hedges screen out neighbors on either side, while a picket fence in front offers privacy without obscuring the view. Her clients are thrilled.

“We spend a lot of time on the porch, watching people admire our garden,” Vickie jokes. “We have everything you'd have in a large garden, but condensed. All a big yard means is more sod.”

